

Written Testimony with respect to Proposed **House Bill 7285**  
“An Act Concerning Complaints That Allege Misconduct By Law Enforcement Agency Personnel”  
Respectfully submitted by Riki L. Motes, March 23, 2017

Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, and all Joint Committee on Judiciary Members;

My name is Riki L. Motes, and I live in Hartford, Connecticut. I ask that you accept this document as my written testimony in support of Proposed House Bill 7285. This Bill is intended to make certain that the provisions of Section 7-294bb of the Connecticut general statutes that concern handling of a complaint from citizens such as myself are complied with in a uniform and fair manner by all Police Departments across our great state.

This is a particular concern to me as a result of a personal incident that occurred several years ago in a neighboring Connecticut town where I then resided. I was the subject of a police procedure that had an unsatisfactory and negative resolution. At that time I wanted to file a complaint to let the police department of that town understand my perspective of the incident, in the hope that future police action might be modified for a better and more effective outcome. However I was too intimidated by the incident itself to take steps to file such complaint. It is with this personal experience in mind that I write to this committee, in the hope that we can improve the complaint process to result in more positive outcomes for all.

It is my understanding that Proposed House Bill 7285 recognizes that our police complaint process needs improvement, but the Bill itself could be improved with certain amendments that ensure complaint forms are readily accessible, that the complaint submission process is clearly defined, that unwarranted filing requirements are omitted (such as the need for notarization), and that any other barriers to submission are also removed. I quote from a January 26, 2017 article in the Hartford Courant (“Police Can’t Discourage Complaints”):

“Police should treat every complaint – and citizen – with respect... adjustments to the law make sense. Set a uniform complaint policy; revise the standard form so that it aligns with the policy; establish penalties for noncompliance; require police to track and report complaints. The level of noncompliance with a state law that law enforcement officials themselves helped to forge mandates it.”

I support Proposed House Bill 7285 but, in accordance with the above, I ask that you include amendments to this Bill in order that it may achieve its full potential. Therefore please amend H.B. 7285 to:

1. establish meaningful penalties for law enforcement agencies that do not comply with state complaint acceptance and investigation laws,
2. create a standardized complaint form that is compliant with best practices and translated into all commonly-spoken languages in Connecticut, and
3. require law enforcement agencies to track complaint data and to annually report specific complaint information to the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

The complaint process should reflect a dialogue between citizens and law enforcement. Police must understand the public’s perception and stand ready to accept feedback in order to identify opportunities for improvement. It is my opinion that the Bill and amendments discussed here would be beneficial to citizens and law enforcement alike, and that this should be the result we strive to achieve.

For all the reasons stated above, I ask that members of this committee amend and support Proposed House Bill 7285.

Thank you for your consideration. Respectfully,

Riki L. Motes  
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